JEEZ, JUNKO! CAN'T YOU EVEN MANAGE THAT?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU ACTUALLY QUALIFIED! YOU SURE YOUR DAD DIDN'T JUST--
H-HEY! TETSUKO! CUT IT OUT!
CLENCH
HMPH! JUST BECAU YOU CAN FL IN THE A DOESN'T MA YOU A REA WITCH!
GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER!
BWOOOO
AH...!

# CHAPTER 6: WHAT MAKES AN ACE

WHRL
PLIP
DMP
DMP
DMP
AHA! HEY, JUN-CHAN. COULD YOU--
DMP
BLINK
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO HER?
JUN-CHAN?

SIGH
THOSE NAVY CHICKS ARE STARTING TO GET PRETTY GOOD, DON'TCHA THINK?
YEAH. OF COURSE, THEY'D HAVE TO, TO SURVIVE THIS BATTLEFIELD. THEY COULD STILL STAND TO GET A LOT BETTER, THOUGH.
TRUE. ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING HOW RAW THEY WERE WHEN THEY STARTED.
BUT THAT SHORT GIRL IS STILL COMPLETELY USELESS.
TRUE. GIVEN THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS, WE'D PROBABLY FLY EASIER KNOWING SHE WASN'T THERE.
SHE'S NOT NEARLY GOOD ENOUGH TO BE SENT OUT INTO A REAL BATTLE.
PEEK
JOLT
WHO KNOWS?
YOU KNOW, I HEARD SHE'S THE DAUGHTER OF ONE OF THE NAVY'S TOP OFFICERS.
REALLY? DOES THAT EXPLAIN WHAT SHE'S DOING HERE?

I DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO BECOME A WITCH.
THE ONLY REASON I WENT TO THE COMMUNITY CENTER IN THE FIRST PLACE IS BECAUSE I HAPPENED TO HAVE MAGIC.
I MET MIO-CHAN.
NICE TO MEET YOU.
AND SEEING HOW BEAUTIFUL AND STRONG SHE WAS, EVEN THOUGH SHE COULDN'T REALLY CONTROL HER POWER...
BUT THEN...
I STARTED TO DREAM ABOUT FLYING THE SKIES WITH HER.
MADE ME THINK MAYBE, SOMEDAY, I COULD BE LIKE HER.
IT DIDN'T WORK OUT THAT WAY AT ALL.
BUT IN THE END...

HUFF
SKFF
HAAH...
I KNOW RUNNING AWAY FROM THE BASE IS POINTLESS.
WHAT ON EARTH AM I DOING...?
SNIFFLE
I'VE BEEN DOING NOTHING BUT RUNNING AWAY THIS WHOLE TIME ANYWAY.
BESIDES...

EVEN THOUGH I KNEW MIO-CHAN WAS HAVING A REALLY HARD TIME.
I'M A TERRIBLE PERSON.
REALLY TER-RIBLE.
I HATED MYSELF SO MUCH FOR THAT.
SO I'VE BEEN TRYING REALLY, REALLY HARD TO GET GOOD ENOUGH TO FLY BY HER SIDE...
BUT I JUST KEEP DROPPING FURTHER AND FURTHER BEHIND.
AT THIS RATE, I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO CATCH UP...
I'LL BE LEFT ALL ALONE.
SNIFFLE
SNIFFLE
SNIFFLE
AND THEN I...

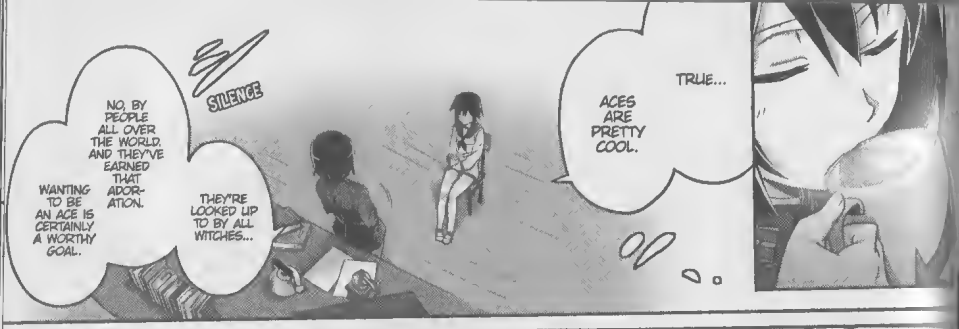
I WASN'T LOOKING UP TO MIO-CHAN BECAUSE OF WHO SHE WAS...
I USED HER AS MY EXCUSE.
CLENCH
I...
BECAUSE SHE COULDN'T USE HER POWERS RIGHT...
BECAUSE JUST WANTING TO BE A WITCH DIDN'T MAKE HER FLY...
I THOUGHT SHE'D ALWAYS BE HERE WITH ME, THE ETERNAL KLUTZ.
"IF USING THIS EYE IS WHAT IT TAKES ..."
"TO PROTECT THAT SOME-BODY ..."
...I'VE BEEN AFRAID THAT MIO-CHAN WOULD MOVE ON AND LEAVE ME BEHIND.
BUT, EVER SINCE THAT DAY...

BRUMMMM
RATTL
RATTL
RATTL
HMM...
YES, MA'AM.
STOP HERE.
BRRMMMM
SHFF
BRUMMMM
SKRRR
SKSH

JUNKO'S GONE?!
KLATTER
WHAT ?!!
I WAS WORRIED, SO I SEARCHED FOR HER, BUT NO LUCK.
はぁ...
ぶるっ
YEAH, I CALLED OUT TO HER IN THE HALL, BUT SHE SPUN AROUND AND TOOK OFF.
ENOUGH. LET'S FOCUS ON FINDING HER NOW.
KRUUUSH
AAARGH!!
OKAY, OKAY! I MAY HAVE BEEN A LITTLE HARD ON HER! SHEESH!
.....
WH-WHAT? IT'S NOT MY FAULT!

HERE.
THIS'LL WARM YOU UP.
TUNK
RATTL
SO BITTER!
I-I'M SORRY.
I'M NOT A BIG COFFEE DRINKER...
.....
BIG
SMILE
.....
I PUT A LOT OF MILK AND SUGAR IN THAT CUP, THOUGH, SO IT SHOULD BE FINE. TRY IT.
AHH. TOO BITTER FOR YOU?
SO...
WHAT WERE YOU DOING OUT THERE?
SHFF

SHYR
SHYR
KCHAK
WHAT ARE YOU DOING ALL THE WAY OUT HERE?
SKFF
SHF
YOU'RE GOING TO CATCH YOUR DEATH OF COLD.
SIGH...
.....
GOODNESS! YOU MUST BE CHILLED TO THE BONE.
.....
SKWEEZ
IT'S TOO CHILLY TO STAY OUT HERE.
TUG
COME ON. GET IN.


SILENCE
NO, BY PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD, AND THEY'VE EARNED THAT ADORATION.
WANTING TO BE AN ACE IS CERTAINLY A WORTHY GOAL.
THEY'RE LOOKED UP TO BY ALL WITCHES...
TRUE...
ACES ARE PRETTY COOL.

BUT...
CREATING SPLASHY BATTLE HEADLINES FOR THE NEWSPAPERS...
IS NOT THE ONLY WAY WE WITCHES CAN SERVE.

IF AN ACE'S SPECTACULAR AERIAL BATTLE CAN HELP EASE THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO LIVE IN FEAR OF NEUROI...
THEN DON'T YOU THINK...
THAT EVERYONE WHO SUPPORTS THAT ACE FROM THE SHADOWS IS JUST AS IMPORTANT?

NO MATTER HOW SKILLED, THERE IS ONLY SO MUCH ONE PERSON CAN DO BY THEMSELVES.
AND THERE ARE SOME THINGS NO ONE CAN DO ALONE. THAT'S WHY WE ALL HELP EACH OTHER AND LEAN ON EACH OTHER FOR SUPPORT.

THERE'S THE HIGH-ALTITUDE SQUADS THAT SUPPORT OUR FIGHTERS.
THE GROUND UNITS THAT GUARD OUR BASES.
EVEN THE STAFF WHO PREPARE OUR MEALS IN THE MESS TENT.
THE MECHANICS WHO REPAIR OUR STRIKER UNITS AND KEEP THEM SHIP-SHAPE.

TWITCH

I...
I DON'T BELONG HERE.

SUPER ELITE FIRST NEW ENEMY KILL 30 HOURS
HA HA HA!
WAR GODDESS
MAIZURU
AHH, I GET IT NOW.
WITH THAT LOT SURROUNDING HER, IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE...

TEAR
EVERYONE ELSE IS SO MUCH BETTER THAN ME.
I WON'T EVER BE AN ACE.
SO I... I...

BLINK
きょとん...
OH?

DO YOU THINK I COULD DO THAT?
REALLY...?
IS UP TO YOU.
THAT...
DO YOU MIND IF I COME BY FOR COFFEE AGAIN SOMETIME?
UM...
SURE, KID. ANYTIME YOU LIKE.
BIG
SMILE
SWFF

JUST ADD A LITTLE MILK AND SUGAR, AND VOILA! IT'S THAT SIMPLE.
HERE SEE? IF BLACK COFFEE IS TOO BITTER FOR YOU..
OH...
SNIFFLE
IT'S WHAT THEY DO WITH IT.
WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT ISN'T WHAT THEIR TALENT IS...
SIGH-
THEY'RE REALLY JUST NOTES ON A PAGE. ONE LITTLE THING.
A SOLDIER'S BATTLE RECORD, THEIR SKILLS...
THERE'S KEEPING TRACK OF TOMOKO, WHO'S ALWAYS CHARGING HEADLONG INTO THINGS BATTLE REPORTS TO FILE. THE BUDGET TO TRACK ENDLESS PAPERWORK. MEETINGS WITH SUPERIORS. IT NEVER ENDS!
FOR EXAMPLE, TRYING TO MANAGE A UNIT IS MUCH HARDER THAN FLYING OFF TO BATTLE.
OH, FAIRNESS ISN'T EVEN REMOTELY A FACTOR!
THAT ISN'T REALLY FAIR.
MAYBE... BUT STILL...

# Chapter 6:
# What Makes an Ace [Mission Complete]

JUNKO!
OH...!
FIDGET
UM...
JEEZ...
SHE'S NOT HERE, EITHER. WHERE COULD SHE HAVE GOTTEN TO?
AH...!
SHOOP
FINE, FINE! I'LL APOLOGIZE. SHEESH!
HN.
JUNKO, I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID WHAT I DID. I'M SORRY, AND TO MAKE UP FOR IT, I'LL GET YOU WHATEVER CANDY YOU WANT.
THAT'S NOT ENOUGH.
WHAT? C'MON! O-OKAY... A MONTH'S SUPPLY OF CANDY, THEN?
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
HEE...!
GIGGLE
HEE HEE HEE!
I'M SORRY I WORRIED YOU...
BUT EVERYTHING IS OKAY NOW.
GRIN
OH, BUT I'LL TAKE THAT MONTH'S SUPPLY OF CANDY, TOO!
NO CLUE...
.....?
DO YOU THINK SHE'D EAT A MONTH'S WORTH...?